



# Platinum Nuggets

Platinum WIC PCS Quarterly Newsletter



**Issue Topic: Employee Training — Dealing with Angry Customers**

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## Announcements

Check out the [2012 CWA Annual Conference information](#). This year’s theme focuses on Platinum Partnerships: Expanding Your Network!

## Resources

[Dealing with Difficult People](#) by Roberta Cava

**Next Issue July 2012**

### Topic:

**Staff Engagement**  
highlighting the  
platinum principle  
“Voice”

For more information or to submit suggestions for topics or case studies, please contact

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## Introducing the “Platinum Nuggets” Newsletter

What comes to mind when you hear the words “platinum” and “nuggets”? Platinum can be described as “precious and rare” and nuggets are “something small but valuable or excellent.” This newsletter provides concise, valuable tidbits that you may find useful to enhance your relationship with those you serve and create platinum WIC services.

Participant-Centered Services, or PCS, is a journey of transformation for every WIC agency. It’s about changing anything that could make a difference between “just WIC” and a “Wow!” WIC experience for the participants and staff who walk in the door every day.

Each quarterly newsletter features a theme related to one of the eight domains of the PCS model –

**Site Environment, Employee Training, Worksite Wellness, Partnerships, Cultural Competency, Leadership and Training, Education, and Engaged Staff.**



A real-life case study is presented as an activity in each newsletter that you can use for staff training. Staff can discuss how they would handle each situation, and then compare their ideas with actual strategies used and the result. Each issue includes specific customer service tips related to the theme, as well as a list of resources when applicable. The theme for this issue is **“Staff Training on Customer Service”** and falls within the **Employee Training** domain.

## Why a Platinum WIC newsletter?

You can use this newsletter to:

- Keep PCS principles and practices in the forefront of our day-to-day business
- Provide customer service tips for improving services to WIC families and staff
- Share best practices with each other

## Case Study Scenario

A participant came into a WIC office and found out she did not have an appointment. She was very upset, and began yelling at staff, calling them liars and accusing them of giving her the wrong appointment time. Calmly, WIC staff apologized for any mix-up and assured her that they would fit her in right then. The participant continued to yell at staff, stating she had just come from the public assistance office, and she had to take a long bus ride to get to the WIC office.

**What would you do?**

### Dealing with Angry Customers

A fuming, angry customer using harsh language is not something anyone wants to deal with; yet at times, that is exactly what we have to do. So what can you do? The following are some tips you can use for dealing with an angry customer.

**Listening...** Practice the skill of active listening. Let the customers express their thoughts and feelings. Be prepared to listen to emotion without responding with emotion. In order to make the best of a bad situation, it is important that you do not take the experience personally. Instead, let them vent. This will make them feel better and allow you to get a better sense of the situation. It will also make them more receptive to listening to what you have to say next.

**Don't Argue...** Avoid interrupting the customer with your responses before he or she has a chance to finish venting. Instead, use this time to identify the problem. This avoids making matters worse. Take quiet deep breaths and wait patiently for your turn to speak.

**Empathize and Comfort...** A simple apology from you about their experience (without blaming anyone) is one of the fastest ways to calm people down. Speak softly and with a steady tone. Validate their feelings and experience, and offer reassurance. Then share what you can do to help.

**Be Polite and Extend Help...** Ask how you can help. Offer some solutions that may work. Understand what the problem is and try to resolve it in the best possible manner.

**Follow Up...** This is a really important step to carry out whenever possible. Following up after an incident reassures the customer that you are genuinely supportive and that you have their best interests in mind.

### Case Study Conclusion

The participant stopped. She asked the WIC staff person, "What did you say? You will fit me in?" The WIC staff person calmly confirmed they would fit her in and that they understood she was upset. The participant lowered her voice, sat down, and began to calm down. The staff person said, "Let's look in the computer to see what happened. It looks like your appointment was made at another location. We are a different WIC office, but we can fit you in if you would like." The participant realized she had made an appointment at another site and said: "Here I was yelling at you when it was my mistake. When things go wrong, it seems like everything goes wrong." She was very apologetic, and WIC staff was able to fit her into the schedule. She left the WIC office with a big "Thank you!"

**Which Platinum Principles do you see being used to provide excellent customer service in this situation? (Refer to the PCS Model)**

#### Assess Your Skills

When dealing with angry customers...	most of the time	sometimes	hardly ever
I give my undivided attention			
I am patient			
I respect differences in others			
I ask open-ended questions to learn more about the situation			
I use reflective listening skills			
I maintain my composure			

If most of your answers are "most of the time" good for you! If not, what would help you strengthen these skills?